

Robert Y. Hayne to Andrew Jackson, September 3, 1828, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

ROBERT Y. HAYNE TO JACKSON.

Confidential

Charleston, S. C. , September 3, 1828.

My Dear Sir. Knowing the numerous demands made on your time and attention, I have avoided writing to you of late for fear that I might give you the additional trouble of answering my letters. I beg however that you will not put yourself to the inconvenience of doing so *now* , as my only object in writing at this time is to keep you well advised of the actual state of things in this quarter of the union. Though you must have seen too much of the misrepresentations and falsehoods of the administration presses to put any reliance on their statements, concerning the alledged “treasonable designs of the Southern States”, yet it may be proper to put you in possession of the real state of public feeling here on the great questions which now agitate the public mind. You know full well that prior to the year 1824, the Southern States were unanimous in opposition to a Tariff framed with a view to the advancement of manufactures; you must yourself recollect the Memorials and Protests which were submitted to Congress during that year against the further prosecution of a system which we believed to be fraught with great injustice if not with ruin to the Cotton growing States; and I am sure you cannot have forgotten the strenuous exertions made by myself and others to stem the torrent which *we believed* , was hurrying the Country to inevitable destruction. Though it was my misfortune on that occasion to find myself opposed to the course, which you felt it to be, your duty to pursue, yet I assure you that this difference of opinion has not shaken in the smallest

Library of Congress

degree the confidence and attachment I have always cherished towards you; and that in these sentiments the people of South Carolina cordially unite. We have believed that while you are favorable to the protection of all the great interests of the Country, you are not disposed to advance any one of them at the expence of the rest, and, that though you are desirous of securing the manufacture in the country of all the articles deemed essential to national defence, yet you would not be willing to adopt the prohibitory policy, nor to push the system of protection beyond the point of creating a fair competition between foreign and domestic goods; but above all we feel assured that you would never consent to make this a mere party question, by connecting it with the Presidential election, thus introducing into the Country a system of mercenary politics, and buying up the people with their own money; as the present administration have done and are still doing. Although therefore the people of South Carolina have most deeply regretted that your views, do not accord with their own on the constitutionality and expediency of the protecting policy yet they have all times felt the most unshaken confidence in your patriotism, justice, and moderation, and have yielded, and will continue to yield you, the most cordial support for the first office in the gift of the people. As it was the policy of the Admn. to buy up the whole class of the manufactures by agreeing to make their claims (without any regard to their justice) an administration question, it became no less the interest than the duty of the Southern States, to oppose to the uttermost so nefarious a scheme, by which votes were to be bought up for Mr. Adams by money to be drawn indirectly from the pockets of the Southern people. The real question was not, what protection, did the manufactures actually need, but how much was necessary to secure their votes for Mr. Adams, and this, was, if possible, to be effected without imposing any burthens on New England. Against a scheme so iniquitous the whole South was found to be opposed almost as one man, and I am happy to add that most of your friends in the other States (though favorable to the Tariff system,) united with the South in the attempt to resist the consummation of this plot of Mr. Clay's. I am sorry to be compelled to add however that some of your friends by acting with less firmness than the crisis demanded, enabled the administration to gain a triumph, when the victory was entirely in our own hands. A persevering refusal to

Library of Congress

make any of the modifications to the Bill which were designed for the exclusive benefit of the East, at the expence of the West and the South (and without effecting which it is certain the New England Members would have generally voted against the Bill,) deprived us of the advantage of exposing to the world the hollow pretensions of those who under the pretext of supporting American Industry, were merely driving a bargain for their own personal advantage. The Bill in the shape in which it became a Law must operate most injuriously on the Southern States, and has certainly excited a deep and pervading feeling of dissatisfaction in this quarter of the union. I doubt not that 19/20ths of the people of this State, and of Georgia and a large majority of the people of all the Southern States, entertain a settled conviction that a perseverance in this system, on the principles acted on for the last five years, constantly encreasing the duties on every article up to prohibition, involves the eventual destruction of this quarter of the Country, and must sooner or later destroy the union itself. That South Carolina, cannot manufacture for market, is certain; that a home market for one third part of our Cotton cannot be created for half a century to come is equally clear; and that it must be the inevitable effect of a system of constantly increasing duties to destroy the foreign market seems to admit of no doubt. Entertaining this opinion, and having urged them, with great zeal and earnestness, though without effect, during the last session of Congress, it was certainly not to have been expected that the people of the South would sit down quietly under the operation of a law universally believed by them, to be unconstitutional in its spirit and intent, and known to have had its origin, in the same spirit of "management and intrigue", by which Messrs. Adams and Clay came into power. Indeed Mr Clay in his Pittsburgh speech acknowledged that there was actually a bargain between Mr. Adams and himself on this subject. The public meetings which have taken place, in South Carolina, have been the spontaneous expression of the popular indignation against a system of which they believe they have been made the victims. It is not true that there is any desire on the part of any portion of our citizens to dissolve the union; nor has the Tariff excitement any thing to do with the Presidential election. There does indeed exist a very general impression that the present Administration have endeavoured to use the Tariff as a Hobby on which to ride

Library of Congress

into power; that Mr. Adams (who is known to have been opposed to the system in 1824) has changed his views from personal considerations, and that the south can have no hope of ever obtaining justice from those who act on such principles. The partizans of the Administration amongst us, (who are numerous enough in our Cities and Towns to make a great noise, though they hardly exist out of them)—taking their tone from the Washington Journal and Intelligencer, are endeavouring to advance the election of Mr. Adams, by representing the Tariff excitement here, “as a political movement of the Jackson party, having for its object a separation of the States”. The Editors of the Intelligencer with their characteristic cunning and want of principle, have got up a story which they know to be false of consultations among the Jackson members of Congress during the last session concerning a dissolution of the Union, and to give color to the fabrication have been circulating pretended conversations and declarations of several distinguished leaders of our party. How far success may attend these infamous efforts of the vile panders of the men in power, I cannot say; but I can positively declare, that as far as I know or believe there does not exist a shadow of foundation for any one of the stories industriously circulated on the subject. There is no party here who desire a dissolution of the union. The people are generally *greatly excited* on the subject of the Tariff, but this has nothing whatever to do with the Presidential election. You are supported by the great body of the people not on account of your opinions on the Tariff, (which are known to be opposed to their own,) but because they have entire confidence in your wisdom, and integrity; and it is believed that the men now in power have obtained, and are endeavouring to retain their places by “bargain management and intrigue”, and in direct violation of the will of the people. Should Mr Adams be re-elected and should his administration continue to act on the policy of wholly disregarding the feelings and interests of the Southern States; should they push the manufacturing system, to the point of annihilating our foreign commerce, and above all, should they meddle with our Slave institutions, I would not be answerable for the consequences. I think our Legislature will probably take strong ground on these subjects, but I have no apprehension of their going, at this time beyond a formal manifesto setting forth the injuries of the South, and giving a solemn warning against the

Library of Congress

consequences of a *continued disregard* of our rights and interests. Should you be elected, as there is every reason to believe, we shall look to you as a Pacificator. The difficulties which the present administration have created, will be met by you on coming into office, and yours will be the glory worthy of a civic wreath, (and sufficient of itself to carry down your name with blessings to posterity) of *peaceably removing them*. Possessing as you do the confidence and attachment of the Southern people, and feeling as we know you will, a sincere desire, to do justice to all parties, we fondly indulge the hope that the various portions of the union will once more be bound together in the bonds of friendship and affection. If it shall be in my power to contribute in any way to this desirable result I shall consider it, the happiest incident of my life. I will confess that though I feel as strongly as any man the injustice of which the South has been made the victim, and have no doubt of the unconstitutional character of the late Tariff Bill, yet I have regretted some of the proceedings which have taken place in our State; not so much on account of *their tone* (for though greater moderation would certainly have been desirable, yet we know that men acting under an honest excitement never weigh their words;) but chiefly, because, I could have desired that nothing had been done, that could be *used against us* in the great Presidential contest. Could I have regulated these matters, not a single meeting should have been held until October But it was in vain to attempt to repress the excitement which pervades the State on the subject of the Tariff; an excitement, “not got up by our leading men”, (as has been falsely charged,) but by which they themselves have been hurried away.

Such my dear Sir, is *the true state of things* in this part of the country. Tennessee is not safer in the Presidential contest than South Carolina, and I have no doubt that Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, and Mississippi are equally immoveable. Let not our good friends in Tennessee, lend a ready ear, or give any countenance to the Administrations slanders which are daily poured out upon our devoted heads. In this respect we are only sharing your own fate; the fate indeed of all, who have dared to stand up for the rights and liberties of the people and the *Constitution in its purity*. I shall trouble you no further at this time, I

Library of Congress

particularly desire that you will not suppose that it is my object to draw an answer from you on any of the topics, on which I have touched. On the contrary I beg that this Letter may remain among your private papers, *unanswered*, as my only object in writing it, has been *to give you information* which I suppose may be acceptable, and perhaps useful.

I have to request that Mrs. H. and myself may be particularly remembered to Mrs. J. My little boys (who still retain a lively recollection of your kindness) join with their mother in sending their kind regards to you. My Brother and his family are well, though in consequence of the prevalence of the yellow fever, he has been compelled, (for the safety of his daughter who is a stranger)¹ to take refuge on Sullivan's Island.

¹ In regions where yellow fever prevailed, the notion was long current that natives were immune.

Believe me to be, with the highest respect and esteem yours very sincerely.